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THE USE OF DRUMMING



in the development of self-trust and
healing in the therapeutic process

By Stephen Sideroff, PhD and Steven Angel

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Learning Objectives:

1. Describe what "Primitive Gestalts" are.
2. Explain how drumming affects the brain.
3. Discuss how to use the drumming process to facilitate relaxation.
4. Demonstrate how to use the drumming process to enhance awareness of emotions.
5. Predict how drumming helps empower oneself.

KEYWORDS: authentic self, drumming, self-awareness, personal development, true self, Primitive Gestalt, neurobiological development.

TARGET AUDIENCE: psychologists, psychiatrists, MFT counselors, social workers, therapists.

PROGRAM LEVEL: intermediate

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a novel approach for using rhythmic drumming to facilitate self awareness of authenticity as well as self-trust during the psychotherapy process of emotional healing and growth. For example, building on a concept for early childhood development patterns referred to as "Primitive Gestalts", the rhythmic drumming approach engages the client in a process that contrasts, on an experiential level, conditioned patterns of Primitive Gestalts with their authentic self. The experiential approach to therapy using rhythmic drumming is described as a technique for connecting with unfinished emotional business and linked energetic manifestations, as well as for moving and transforming unfinished emotional energy. As a result, this facilitates the establishment of new and healthier Gestalt patterns.

TERMS

- A) PRIMITIVE GESTALTS:** The neurobiological substrates of childhood learning.
- B) CELL ASSEMBLIES:** The process of memory formation through the establishment of neural networks or engrams.
- C) PARCILLATION:** The process of competitive elimination of neurons and/or neural connections of the cerebral cortex as a product of learning and experience.
- D) RHYTHM OF DISCOVERY:** Uses drumming to help connect and foster greater awareness of one's body.
- E) PULSE BEAT:** Four quarter notes played with alternating hands.
- F) ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAM:** Electrical activity or brain waves of rhythmic as well as non-synchronous activity in several frequency ranges.

We develop personality patterns and their neurological substrates, henceforth referred to as "Primitive Gestalts" (PGs) (Sideroff, 2004-5), from birth and perhaps even while in the womb. In broad terms, these neurobiobehavioral patterns get imprinted as the earliest knowledge about how life and the environment work, along with one's success in getting needs met or minimizing pain. PGs take our genetic heritage and develop it based on our experience and conditioning.

PGs are an adaptation to the childhood environment. In this process of adapting to the childhood environment, survival needs and accommodation to primary caregivers result in the denial of aspects of oneself. This denial engenders disconnecting from one's true self, which interferes with the development of self-trust. The concept of the true self was described by Winnicott as a sense of self based on spontaneous authentic experience, or "feeling real" (Winnicott, 1960). This is in contrast to the false self that develops as a way of accommodating to others and is embedded in the concept of one's PG. Disconnecting from one's true self makes the process of emotional growth difficult. One of the paths to healing and personal growth is through a reconnection with our true selves and the development of self-trust. This paper describes a novel approach using drumming to achieve this reconnection and, therefore, positively modifies PGs.

Primitive Gestalt Development

D.O. Hebb first used the concept of "cell assemblies" to describe the process of memory formation through the establishment of neural networks, or engrams (Hebb, 1949). These assemblies cover an anatomically dispersed but functionally integrated collection of neurons. During the earliest years of childhood, there appears to be a process by which lessons learned strengthen one set of neuronal connections, while eliminating other cells and cell assemblies that are not reinforced. Ebesson suggests that this type of process may be responsible for imprinting (Ebesson 1980). Schore (1994) refers to this process of competitive elimination of excess axons of the cerebral cortex as a product of learning and experience that is referred to as "parcillation." In other words, the reinforcement and strengthening of one set of neuronal connections is accompanied

by the parcillation or elimination of other circuits in a Darwinian type process. It is this process of parcillation, and the functional integration of numerous cell assemblies that is postulated to establish the complex neuronal network system of PG patterns.

We can therefore conceptualize a PG as the neurobiological representation of the learned perceptions and assessment of the world, as well as oneself. The learning takes place primarily through reinforcement patterns and messages from our parents or caregivers. Since the PGs incorporate their own perceptual filter through which the world is subjectively experienced, one tends to accept and remember experiences that fit this filtering mechanism, and reject new experiences that contradict the lessons embedded in our PG.

One of the paths to healing and personal growth is through a reconnection with our true selves and the development of self trust.

This causes us to maintain PGs and rein in new behaviors that do not conform. PGs have a gravitational pull, which means that it is hard to move out of their orbit of influence, thus signifying the power they have over new learning. In the world of physics and complexity modeling, this is referred to as an attractor state. This is what makes change so difficult!

In clinical therapeutic work we frequently hear from the client "that doesn't feel right," as they tend to reject healthy decisions in favor of those potentially self-destructive choices that do "feel right". What they are doing is checking in with—or sensing—their internal Primitive Gestalt pattern to determine what feels right. This is where they are placing their trust. When it doesn't feel right, there is the assumption that it isn't right. As noted above, this is the mechanism whereby outmoded or maladaptive behavior—including cognitive—is maintained.

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Self-Trust

There are many parts of the self that are not acceptable or compatible with the lessons of childhood, and thus are judged negatively and tend to be suppressed. It is in this way that one begins to separate from one's true self, consciously or unconsciously making a choice for love and survival—or at least the attempt at receiving love and connection—while ignoring one's true self and its expression. Alice Miller described how a sensitive child learns to tune in to, be responsive to, and "take care of" their primary caregiver (Miller, 1979). The child learns to behave in a way that insures the perpetuation of that primary connection, or the fantasy of it, while avoiding rejection. The unaccepted parts that are the true self, and source of real trust, are rejected or ignored.

As we reinforce or play out patterns that adhere to someone else's reality, and don't express our natural tendencies, we miss the opportunity to discover what is true for ourselves. Instead of learning about our true nature, we form and rely on a "fantasy bond" or an imagined connection with our primary caregivers (Firestone, 1987). These unconscious decisions eliminate the opportunity for expression of our true essence in the "playing fields" of our childhood. Playing fields simply refers to the childhood environment where experimentation, and trial and error without serious consequences, is available. Therefore, we are unable to learn

what is okay about ourselves while learning appropriate self-adjustment. In other words, we are not able to develop a sense of trust in ourselves.

Trust is an important ingredient in the process of personal growth and action. Testing out new ways of being in the world and the reactions of others requires the expression of new behaviors which will always be experienced as risky and uncomfortable. Without the knowledge of who we truly are and how our real selves are received there can be no self-trust. We are then left even more dependent on our learned yet unconscious methodology and the perspective of others. We become tied to patterns that may only be useful under specific circumstances and with people similar to our childhood environment. For example, having a parent who is critical or disapproving of any behavior that does not fit his or her perspective can result in anxiety or fear of rejection. The lack of self-trust can leave one without sufficient self-support to engage in new behaviors or ideas, which is the foundation for change and a growing experience of self-support.



Emotional Health and Neurophysiological Rhythms

We may conceptualize PGs as having a neurobiological substrate based on cell assemblies, which are a network of functionally integrated brain cells originally suggested by Hebb (1947). These substrates would then be expected to have a neurophysiological aspect that is represented by specific oscillatory patterns or frequencies. The electroencephalogram, or EEG, consists of the electrical activity or brain waves of rhythmic as well as non-synchronous activity in several frequency ranges. There is considerable evidence that brain rhythms play an important role in orchestrating the cell assemblies. Fries (2005), for example, has summarized the evidence indicating that "activated neuronal groups oscillate and thereby undergo rhythmic excitability fluctuations that produce temporal windows for communication" (Fries 2005).

Canolty and associates (2010) have shown that the response of single neurons was dependent on the systematic oscillatory behavior of nerve cells from multiple areas of the brain (Canolty, et al 2010). This data suggests that "neuronal oscillations" may



synchronize anatomically dispersed ensembles actively engaged in functional roles. To the extent that these brain rhythms correlate with and produce functional behavior in a person's PG, it might be possible to facilitate shifting these long term patterns through a process that affects these brain rhythms. For example, research by one of the authors demonstrated significant changes in five of the ten clinical scales of the MMPI as a result of EEG biofeedback, in which specific EEG changes were reinforced (Scott, Kaiser, Othmer and Sideroff, 2005).

The Use of Drumming in Support of the Development of Trust and "Healthy Gestalt Patterns"

Music, with its foundation in rhythm and vibrating frequencies, has been shown to affect mood, brain function and physiological processes including the EEG. It has been shown, for example, that listening to Mozart results in a decrease in alpha and theta frequencies that is more pronounced in the left, rather than right hemisphere of the brain (Petsche, et al. 1988). These changes are indicative of improved cognitive functioning.

Similarly, preliminary work by the authors using rhythmic drumming techniques to facilitate emotional healing and growth among struggling Kindergarten through 12th grade students has demonstrated improved reading performance. In a program called "Reading & Rhythm" the authors have used rhythmic drumming to synchronize energy, thought, and emotion to improve focus and concentration. Reading test scores have shown improvements of up to 200%, seven grade levels in reading fluency, along with improvements in reading accuracy (preliminary unpublished research).

Neher demonstrated the occurrence of auditory driving in response to a drumbeat. Using drumming frequencies of 3, 4, 6, and 8 beats per second he found that these stimulus frequencies were reflected in EEG brainwave responses in various motor and sensory areas of the cortex (1961).

In another demonstration of the effects of rhythmic drumming, Maxfield (1990) exposed participants to different forms of drumming, one of which was labeled "Shamanic Drumming," which referred to creating a rhythm of 4 to 4.5 beats per second. She found that this 4 to 4.5 beats per second drumming pattern produced

increases in theta rhythm (EEG brainwave frequencies of between 4 and 8 cycles per second). The Maxfield findings are particularly significant as other research has indicated that the theta state is an ideal state for re-scripting or re-imprinting the brain with positive emotional states (Budzynski 1972 and 1997).

In another study, Ping Ho et al (2010) used a process of rhythmic drumming in a controlled 12 week study of school counselor-led drumming, studying the effects on the social and emotional behavior in fifth graders. The weekly intervention integrated rhythmic drumming with other group counseling activities. The drumming group showed significant improvement over the controls in attentive problems and depression, as well as other behavioral and emotional scales. In another study, with a group of employees over 65 years of age, it was found that drumming impacted mood as well as immune system functioning (Wachi et al 2007). Bittman et al (2004) showed that a group drumming intervention reduced burnout and improved mood states in first year nursing students.

This evidence of the effects of the drumming process on brain and body rhythms, as well as behavior, suggests that this process can impact the neurophysiological and neuroanatomical basis of personality variables. We previously addressed the loss of connection with one's true self and self-trust due to childhood learning and the setting up of neurodevelopmental Primitive Gestalts. Given the importance of self-trust and its foundation in one's true or authentic self, it would be helpful if the drumming process could be used to facilitate the reconnection to one's true self and the development of self-trust.

To support this therapeutic process, one of the authors (SA) has developed an approach referred to as Rhythm of Discovery (ROD), which is described in greater detail in the next section. ROD uses drumming to help connect and foster greater awareness of one's body. This occurs in a number of ways: through physical movement, the impact and experience of vibration, as well as the physical changes that are felt as a result of the drumming and rhythm process. The authors suggest that the drumming process creates a "playing field," that is, an environment within which exploration and experimentation takes place. In this environment, the drumming is an extension of ourselves,

READING & RHYTHM DRUMMING

ENERGY

THOUGHT

EMOTION

INCREASED
FOCUS &
CONCENTRATION

and thus initially of our dominant pattern—what the authors are referring to as the Primitive Gestalt.

Through the drumming process or journey, clients have access to this pattern and its vibrational foundation. As the participant explores new ways of being, this is reflected in new drumming patterns. These new rhythms and their energetic movements can then drive or entrain brain and body vibrational patterns (Maxwell 1990, Nehar 1961). Therefore, clients create the possibility for the release of the old pattern with the potential for creating something new, both neurophysiologically as well as psychosocially, thus referred to as a “Healthy Gestalt” pattern. In other words, the drumming rhythm can serve as a bridge, and be a powerful device to drive and alter brain and body activity in support of emotional health.

The Drumming Process

When a person engages in the process of drumming with the facilitator for the first time, they tend to be self-conscious and self-critical. They are taking part in a new behavior, one that is unfamiliar, and therefore they do not trust themselves and valiantly try to control the process. As a result, there is most likely a dominance of the left hemisphere of the brain. The authors suspect this because when we are more critical or analytical, the left side of the brain is more active (e.g. Goel, et al, 1998).

We can relate this to what Fritz Perls (Perls 1951) referred to as the “top dog,” that part of the individual that makes demands focused on adhering to certain societal and familial norms and standards. These demands are often characterized by “shoulds” and “oughts.” The “top dog”

can also be thought of as the voice and the “lookout” of the Primitive Gestalt. Its behavior takes the form of judgment and self-consciousness: “Am I doing this right?” “What are others thinking?” and “This isn’t good enough.” To a great extent the focus is “out there,” an external sense of what is right. This process is symbolic of how our lives are controlled and how this maintains the PG. As mentioned previously, this self-critique is what disconnects us from our authentic or true self and its core rhythm.

Using the ROD technique, the facilitator starts with the Pulse Beat which is defined as four quarter notes played with alternating hands. Between the quarter notes (when nothing is played), a “space” is created. The relationship between the beat and space helps establish a synchronous rhythm in the mind and body. The facilitator advises the

Rhythm of Discovery
uses drumming to
help connect and
foster greater
awareness of
one's body

RHYTHM OF DISCOVERY

minimizes effort or trying, and thus is not forced. As soon as there is a process of allowing, it further facilitates the activation of the right hemisphere of the brain, and the synchronization of the two hemispheres. As a result, this creates a synergy that can begin to disrupt the dominance of the left brain and the "top dog." As the power of the old PG pattern is challenged or loosened, there is a facilitation of one's access to their deeper and more essential pattern or rhythm.

In the first stages of the drumming process there is self-consciousness as the "top-dog" of the Primitive Gestalt is trying to get it "right," while judging whether it is right.

a flowing hard rhythm which could embody emotional strength.

The separation of conflicting internal voices is enhanced by picturing specific disturbing events. Visualization pinpoints a detailed area of a hurtful experience, and combined with the physical expression of rhythm, creates the moment of disconnecting and damaging emotional ties. In addition, the rhythm itself has the power to entrain and shift a client's brain waves, further disrupting old patterns.

We ask the client to visualize connecting to their heart in order to create a vessel to hold their emotions. They are then asked

client to focus on the beat, and then on the space in between the beats. It will be noted later in the case study that these spaces will allow new positive relationships to develop.

The facilitator then asks the client to close his or her eyes. The Pulse Beat, along with visualization of specific areas of the body (i.e. shoulders, chest and lungs, spine, facial, cheeks, etc.), is used to release stress, anxiety, and tension (Ping Ho, 2010; Wachti 2007; Bittman 2004). The facilitator guides the client's awareness to notice the signals and experiences of his or her body. This focus helps to initiate the engagement of the right hemisphere of the brain. The sound itself also automatically activates the right hemisphere. This process helps to create calmness in the body and encourages an emotional state that is open to healing. This is important since the "top dog's" criticalness and judgment tend to keep the left side of the brain dominant (Goel, 1998).

In the drumming process the facilitator may refer to this struggle. One of the guiding principles in the drumming process, as with meditative approaches, is "to allow" the sound and rhythm to develop, and to develop from within. The use of the term "allow" facilitates a more passive process that

At this point the facilitator is also drumming, which is aimed at loosening the client's defenses or bypassing his or her "top-dog" consciousness.

With the repetition of the Pulse Beat, the focus on the body and on "allowing," and the therapist's initial joining in, the client begins to trust the drum therapy process. At this point the client starts letting go of conscious control and begins to have greater access to unconscious material, such as emotions related to previous relationships and experiences.

The process continues by encouraging the client to visualize the conscious and unconscious mind traveling down into the body. The facilitator will say a phrase in relation to the client's history to trigger a reaction which is expressed through drumming. For example, a client may pound relentlessly while visualizing an action of a controlling, calculating parent (typical negative internal voices usually represent a figure of authority). The physical hitting of the drum (using hands or sticks) enables the client to confront negative voices, while separating them from their own voice. The drumming may be a harsh out of control pounding which indicates anger or rage, or

to allow the true emotional voice of their heart to be expressed through drumming. All facets of drumming rhythms are used to activate aspects of the unconscious, emphasizing and continuing to use the space between the sounds as a doorway to the unconscious. By focusing in the heart area, we specifically encourage heart-based feelings to emerge and be experienced, such as love, caring, and support. (Bair, 1998)

Part of the process of healing is the awareness of the negative and critical voices, as well as the emotional feelings toward these voices. Drumming creates a way to express these feelings which serves the process of releasing them. By letting go of these feelings and the individual's distraction by them, the client is more available in the present to create a new authentic and positive voice.

The facilitator guides the client into the pelvic region where abuse, trauma, and other forms of suppression reside (Lowen 1994). Trauma can be considered frozen energy (Levine, 2010). The rhythm of the drumming has the power to shift this energy. This helps the client address experiences of past abuse. For the upcoming example, shifting this frozen pattern was observed by playing forcefully on the

THEMES OF THE PROCESS

- INITIAL AWKWARDNESS OF DRUMMING PROCESS (ASSOCIATED WITH SELF-JUDGMENT)
- EMERGENCE OF ASSOCIATIONS WITH PRIMARY CAREGIVERS AND THEIR MESSAGES
- ISSUES OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS
- GUIDING VIBRATIONAL SOUNDS OF DRUMMING THROUGH THE BODY (RELEASE TENSION)
- ENTRAIN THETA BRAIN WAVE FREQUENCIES
- SHIFT FROM THINKING TO FEELING
- CREATE A CONTAINER FOR HOLDING FEELINGS

center of the drum, which represented confrontation and release from the abuser. The drumming process supports self-assertion, allowing one's identity to surface independently from a parent or their childhood suppression. This freedom facilitates an emotional opening and helps create a new rhythm that is an expression of the client's authentic or true self. As a result, a specifically guided and focused rhythm can serve as an anchor or grounding that facilitates and represents self-trust.

In summary, participants are encouraged to develop their personal rhythm which is born from a process of experimentation, while loosening and letting go of the old patterns. This rhythm helps shift internal and neurophysiological patterns from the old PGs with the potential of new healthier patterns. By bringing in the right hemisphere of the brain, and helping to facilitate the synchronization of the two hemispheres, we tap into a person's unconscious by moving them into their bodies and out of their controlling mind. It is from this unconscious place that clients have further access to creating a rhythm associated with their true self.

Case Example

What follows is a description of work with one of SA's clients. It demonstrates the themes of the process which include:

- the initial awkwardness of the drumming process associated with self-judgment, control, and the old PG pattern
- emergence of associations with primary caregivers and their messages
- issues of unfinished business
- guiding the vibrating sounds of the drumming through the body to release tension
- entrain theta brain wave frequencies
- shift from thinking to feeling
- create a container for holding feelings

The process establishes the "playing field," within which the client gets to express and experiment. Within this context the client can use the drumming to express and release feelings. This results in finding one's own voice, thus creating a more authentic self-expression (internally based and created instead of trying to conform). This facilitates the finding of one's strength, the ability to stand up to old voices and messages, and the ability to begin developing self-confidence and self-trust.

The client—DP—was an outwardly successful male in his mid-forties. He had overcome a drinking problem and characterized himself as a workaholic. He was disconnected from his feelings and struggling in his relationships with his wife and son. DP had a dominating father who was strict, controlling, manipulative, and had very high

expectations for his son. This overwhelmed DP as a child and interfered with his development of personal power.

DP's internal voice or internal "parent"—similar to the characterization of the "top dog" mentioned above—was dominated by controlling messages that originated from his father. His relationship with his mother was complex. He felt loved by her but she was passive and fragile, which resulted in a dependent attachment and fear of expressing his emotions. Consequently, he became disconnected from his feelings. When DP was a child he tried to appease his dad by being imaginative and non-confrontational, while managing his pain through dissociation.

In the first session, DP reluctantly engaged in the drumming process. We began by establishing the pulse beat that focused first on the beats and then on the space in between the beats. With his eyes closed SA asked DP to visualize the drumming pulse going to different parts of his body, moving his energy and releasing tension.

Initially, SA focused the therapy work in DP's chest as a place where he can connect with his voice. As the client focused on his father, his drumming became more constricted, reflecting his fear and submissiveness. DP's body became tense and his drumming strokes were tight and lacked expressiveness.

DP was asked to bring awareness into his heart area to experience his feelings towards his father. In our discussion afterwards, DP realized the constraints of the past, and as a father, some of his own actions were similar to those of his controlling father.

In the second session the drumming continued to focus on his chest area. SA's goal and intention were to use the drumming to identify and develop DP's own voice and identity as distinct from the existing dominant expressions of his PG. It is here that the drumming can facilitate the separation of the internal negative voices from the subject's true personal voice. Once expressed and identified this true expression of DP's self can be reinforced. Through this drumming process, DP was able to identify his own voice separate from other authoritative voices. As a result, this created strength in the rhythms DP played. SA then brought DP's energy down to the pelvic area using visualization and drumming, which helped him connect to his personal power. Below

is an account of the session from SA's notes:

"At first the drumming expressed frozen energy, as noted by his soft and rigid playing. SA encouraged him to play louder. SA played harder and took on the role of the father. The client went to a young age. He had fear of his father and would try to appease him by being creative and non-confrontational. As the client noted, 'My imagination became my source of survival. I would figure out angles and ways to keep myself safe from him.' At this time, SA backed off and played softer. The client's drumming shifted. It became more expressive. At the same time it continued to be soft, indicating the inhibiting force of the father's masculine energy. SA continued to focus on his pelvic area with the drumming, to generate greater support. This helped him bring his masculine energy out, which was expressed through a forceful rolling rhythm. He imagined standing in front of his dad. However as soon as he made what he judged to be a mistake he regressed to

a softer more controlled pattern. SA asked him to stay in his power rhythm and he went back to it. As SA played softer DP was able to hold his own rhythm and his energy became free and his masculine energy was more independent from his father as exemplified by a stronger and more expressive pattern. Afterward, there was a shift in his posture, his chest was expanded and his masculine energy was more pronounced as he noted that he felt more independent."

In the third session, SA asked DP to visualize traveling down into his pelvic area with his drumming to again connect with his own voice and power. What emerged, however, was his father's presence and anger. DP was then guided deeper into his pelvic area and his own identity started to emerge. He felt an opening and flow of energy, along with an increased sense of personal power expressed through the drumming. This time it was not his father's power, but his own. In order to feel more of what it was like, he was asked to explore and play with this new energy.



After a period of time DP brought the intensity down and the drumming sounded more flexible and expressive, as indicated by shifting rhythms. DP stated he felt more of his own power. During this process he briefly experienced a sense of no limitations where he played a very intense, sophisticated, and complex rhythm. SA guided him to lower energy levels until they came to a close. DP reported feeling a sense of fulfillment and in touch with his own power.

In DP's fourth session he confronted his father through the drumming. SA suggested he visualize facing his father while drumming. His eyes were closed and he brought his awareness into his pelvic area. He tried to express himself and angrily played loud with a feeling of frustration from not knowing a way out of his father's emotional grasp. SA asked him to find his own resource in his body, to stay in his feelings and not go into his imagination. DP reported going into his lower pelvic area and finding his own resource, which lasted very briefly. SA

started to play different rhythms, but DP lost his resource and entered into the pressure of perfection enforced by his father. However, he did find his resource again. SA stopped playing, and in his drumming DP explored different ages, feelings, and the need to be responsible. He was then able to explore the emotional terrain in his pelvic area, which was expressed by a more sophisticated rhythm. DP realized what he was feeling; he could be responsible, and this empowered him further.

In the fifth session, SA used drumming with visualization to connect DP's pelvic area to emotions in his heart. Through the rhythms in drumming, DP's energy moved from one area in his body to another. Using visualization, a shadow appeared above DP's heart and was interpreted by DP as a shadow of his father's energy, or more precisely, his father's presence. SA had DP imagine bringing the masculine energy from his pelvic area up to his heart in order to face the shadow. DP was asked to play

forcefully in the center of the drum and the shadow then reduced in size. DP's drumming also changed, becoming softer. However, as feelings of insecurity returned, DP's strokes were on the side of the drum rather than forcefully in the center. DP felt insecure and had the need to conform. When the shadow reappeared, DP brought the shadow into his heart. We might identify this process as acceptance and transformation of his father.

In the sixth session DP imagined bringing his wife and son into his heart. DP could feel the warm presence of his wife and son. His wife and son were in his heart, and at first DP could not enter. SA sang a note that opened his heart, and his wife and son came in. SA used the process of toning, which is singing in elongated vowels. These vocal sounds focus on a particular part of the body that assists the drumming

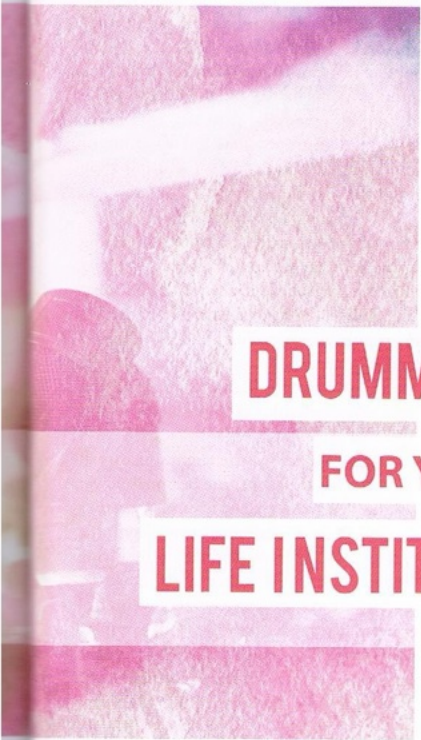
in releasing psychological and emotional blockages. DP visualized all three feeling young and dancing together. The shadow came and was hovering over DP's heart. SA sang in a low tone and asked DP to sing. As encouragement, SA sang with DP. DP found a lower tone and it gained strength so he could take in the shadow. SA asked him to discover his own tone which was a higher note that allowed deep intimacy with his family in his heart. This was expressed by a warm flowing drum rhythm.

In the eighth and ninth sessions the drumming took DP to a young age where his father would overpower him. He talked while playing and went from third person (detachment) to first person (ownership). The "I" spoke, and SA advised DP to play the sound of the dictatorship of his father, and then play his own confusion. DP let go of the shadow and was left with confusion and feeling lost. This illustrates how abusive relationships can create patterns that are held onto as the only known pattern. DP then played a lighter rhythm which represented feeling free, as later reported. This was DP's pattern. Towards the end of the session DP's drumming became strong as his intellect emerged, gaining independence from the shadow—the father. DP felt full and light. In the ninth session DP separated from his father. He realized he did not want to control his son as his father had controlled him.

In the eleventh session SA worked in the chest area with the pulse beat, as well as vocal toning. DP was vulnerable and fearful due to the persistent presence of the shadow.

We continued to work in the chest, and after the vocal toning DP's heart was filled with self love as indicated by a warm sensation in his heart. DP's voice spread into the rest of his body. DP then moved in the pelvic area and his drumming became more expressive, playing a strong rhythmic pattern in the center of the drum. DP's energy opened as he drummed faster, and SA noted his playing was completely different. It was powerful and freeing, as if another person was drumming. SA concluded this new expression was a ritual of DP's passage into manhood. Afterwards, DP stated he had been feeling more powerful, and that he had never felt this way before.

In the remaining sessions, DP's drumming continued to expand emotionally with



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DP experiencing love in his heart. Now in charge, DP could use this passion to hold other emotions and be present with them. Through drumming the shadow began to shift. DP became stronger and was able to say no to his father. As we continued, the representation of DP's father continued to shrink. During one drumming session DP travelled back to three years of age. DP visualized embracing his child in acceptance and love.

In conclusion, drumming and rhythms were used in over 26 sessions to help the client address long standing personal patterns, and explore and develop new and independent energetic patterns associated with the client's power and sense of self. When the client begins to regress, we reinforce the capacity of drumming to serve as an anchor and reference to facilitate reconnection to this power. The successful connection to the rhythm of self empowerment helped the client separate from the hold his father and his childhood had over him. It is assumed, based on previous research (Neher, 1061, Maxwell, 1990), that drumming is also affecting neurophysiological patterns, and facilitating a neurobiological shift from old developmental PG formations to a new and healthier pattern.

This case demonstrates the process of facilitating the establishment of a new rhythm that is the client's own, essential or core rhythm, while helping him let go of the old patterns. Through this internal shift, the client started expressing feelings he had not been able to express before. In a family session with his wife and son, the client cried and told his son he just did not know how to feel before—he felt blocked and unable to express himself. With this breakthrough he now was able to own and express his true feelings. The client was no longer controlled by his father's rhythm or the internal voice from his childhood.

Conclusion

This paper presents a novel approach to personal development and healing. It utilizes a process of rhythm and drumming, developed by the Drumming for Your Life Institute, to address long standing emotional and cognitive patterns embedded in a construct referred to as Primitive

Gestalts. These PGs have a neurobiological foundation whose neurophysiological rhythmic patterns are reflected in their EEG. Because of this foundation, the PGs create a gravitational pull from which it is difficult to break free.

In drumming therapy we are able to open up space for new rhythms to be established and to tap into the unconscious. The process begins with the client playing a rhythm associated with the old or PG pattern. Through the use of the drumming, visualization, energy movement, and the creation of an experimental "field of play," the facilitator and client work together to explore the rhythm of the old PG, while opening to new possibilities. Clients discover their own voice and a new rhythm associated with aspects of self and parts of his or her body. The drumming, with its "traveling rhythms," perform a search and find to help shift the client out of his or her old patterns.

Through the supportive process of moving awareness through the body and connecting to personal and historic associations, this use of drumming and rhythm shifts the client's energy and mental constructs in a positive and healing way. This process is facilitated by the effect of the drumming rhythms that can entrain or drive the neurophysiological rhythms of the brain and body, further shifting away from the original patterns.

This process allows the release of feelings and engages the client in connecting with his or her true self. This was expressed through DP's newly created rhythm that helped free him from the rhythm of the PG. As noted above, the client is able to develop and experience self-trust, which encourages the development of a healthy gestalt pattern that allows emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth.

The acceptance of the client's history allows the expansion of true personal power, and as healthy gestalt patterns reverberate, it is grounded in a new Rhythmic Code. The result is the client reporting enhanced personal power, as the new resonance creates its own energetic center of gravity. Using the analogy from complexity theory, we would say that through the development of new rhythmic patterns a new "attractor state" is created. This new

state, anchored in self-trust and emotional flexibility, results in an enhanced ability to make self-adjustments in the process of establishing one's own healthy and new gestalt patterns.

It is important to emphasize that this drumming process is used as a therapeutic tool. As with all therapeutic tools, its success is dependent on many factors, including the experience and training of the facilitator, and the readiness of the client to experience the awkwardness and vulnerability of trying this new behavior. It has been helpful in a wide range of clients with addictions, abuse, anxiety, and some depression. If an individual is too depressed they may not be able to engage in the drumming process. There is also a self-selection process taking place by which clients contact SA, typically because they are aware of his work in this area. All of these factors should be taken into account when deciding whether to use such a process.

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